The Sun.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JANUARY 14, 1882.

A FRIGHTFUL CRASH.

Passenger Trains in Collision at Spuyten Duyvil.

SENATOR WAGNER KILLED.

Two Palace Cars Telescoped and Burned to Ashes.

A BRIDE AND GROOM PERISH.

Terrible Scenes at the Wreck.

The Fast Express Train from Albany Stopped Mend an Air Brake, and is Run Into by the Tarrytown Local—Two Drawing Room Cars Filled with Members of the Legislature Telescoped and Quickly Burned—No Trace of Senator Wagner Found—Eight Charred Bodies Taken from the Wreck—The Graphic Stories of the Survivors—The Escape of Lieut.-Gov. Barstow.

The heavy Atlantic express train on the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad, due in this city at 7 o'clock last evening, halted to repair a damage to the brake just after having rounded the curve a short distance this side of Spuyten Duyvil. There were thirteen cars in the train, the last six of which were drawing-room cars. In front were two passenger coaches, two mail cars, and an express car. Among the passengers in the drawing room cars were many members of the Legislature, including Senator Webster Wagner and other well-known politicians. While the express train was standing on the track a local train from Tarrytown, running at apparently full speed, crashed into the rear of the standing train. The two rear drawing-room cars were telescoped. They then caught fire and were burned. It is believed that all of the ten or twelve persons in the rear car perished. Senator Webster Wagner was last seen, a moment before the accident, going from the second car from the rear to the rear car, and there is no doubt that he is among the victims. The number of those who perished in the second car from the rear is not known, but there seems to be reason for believing that all of the passengers were not rescued. Among the dead are a young couple who were on their bridal tour. The cause of the accident is not clear, but it seems that there was an almost total absence of attempt to flag the approaching train. The number of dead bodies taken from the wreck at midnight was eight. Several persons are injured, one at least fatally.

The list of those believed at midnight to be dead was as follows:

SENATOR WEBSTER WAGNER of New York.

PARK VALENTINE of Bennington, Vt.

Mrs. PARK VALENTINE of Bennington, Vt.

An unknown woman, stout, apparently 40 years old.

A negro, believed to be an employee on the drawing-room cars.

And three other unrecognized bodies.

D. L. Ransom of the Hoffman House in this city is among the missing.

Those who are known to be wounded are:

OLIVER KEELY of Spring City, Pa.; fatally.

Miss MARY DANIELS of New York; badly.

Assemblyman MONK of Brooklyn; slightly.

Engineer FRANK BURR; slightly.

OLIVER B. KEELY, Spring City, Pa.

D. L. RANSOM of the Hoffman House, New York.

THE STORY OF THE CATASTROPHE.

The Crash and the Terrible Scenes Following it Described by Eye Witnesses.

The Atlantic express, which should have started from Albany at 2:40 o'clock yesterday afternoon, was thirty-five minutes late in leaving that city. It made only two stops, one at Hudson and the other at Poughkeepsie. Between the latter city and New York, seventy-three miles, the train was to make no stop. It ran at high speed, and had nearly made up its lost time before the accident occurred. There were thirteen cars on the train. Six were parlor cars. These were the Red Jacket, Vanderbilt, Sharon, Minnehaha, Empire, and Idlewild. There were four passenger coaches, two mail cars, and one express car.

The train had passed Spuyten Duyvil, and had gone about a third of a mile, when one of the air brakes gave out and the train was brought to a stop about 200 yards from Spuyten Duyvil curve. This curve is one of the sharpest on the road, and an approaching train could not be seen beyond the turn. The train was delayed five or six minutes while workmen were examining and repairing the brake. The train was due at the Grand Central Depot at 7 o'clock.

A local train for passengers left Tarrytown about 6:45, shortly after the express train had passed, and left Spuyten Duyvil at 7:07, being due at the Grand Central Depot at 7:20. The only men who can tell what safeguards had been employed on the Atlantic express to warn approaching trains from the rear, so far as can be learned, are Mr. Park Valentine of Bennington, Vt., a passenger, and the rear brakeman, whose name is said to be George Nealiss.

Mr. Valentine says that he was standing on the rear platform of the palace car Idlewild, which was the last car on the express train, when suddenly a light was visible around Spuyten Duyvil curve, about 200 yards back. The rear man stood on the track, five or six feet from the rear car, with a red lantern and a white lantern. As soon as the light of the approaching train flashed around the curve, Mr. Valentine says, the brakeman sprang forward and ran quickly down the track, swinging his lanterns. Mr. Valentine said that he expected every second to see the approaching train stop; but it came on apparently under full headway. Seeing that a collision was inevitable, as the train drew near, Mr. Valentine jumped from the platform, and escaped without injury. In the doorway Mr. Valentine remembers to have seen a small, slight man, whom he could not identify, as the approaching train struck the express. The small man jumped back into the palace car, and Mr. Valentine is certain that he was one of the killed. Mr. Valentine says that, as near as he can remember, there were but twelve persons in the Idlewild. He believes that not one could have escaped.

The locomotive (No. 80) of the Tarrytown train was in charge of Engineer Frank Burr and Fireman Quaney. Burr was slightly injured about the head, and Quaney escaped uninjured. Both declined last night to give their version of the cause of the collision.

The locomotive crushed into the rear compartments of the rear parlor car, and the car was telescoped with the rear of the parlor car Empire, in front of it. So far as could be learned, nobody escaped from the rear car to tell the story of the disaster.

A passenger who was in the rear of the parlor car Empire says:

"I was standing in the aisle, chatting with Major Charles Ulrich, Commissioner of Emigration, when the crash came. There was a shrill shriek of a locomotive close behind us, a sudden crash like an explosion, and the car became almost dark, and glass and splinters and dust filled the air. Something struck me on the head, and I was half stunned for a moment.

"When I recovered my senses I found my head in contact with a roof ventilator. I thought for an instant that the car had been overturned and was lying on its side, but I soon found that it was upright on the track and that the roof of the rear car had crushed through the roof of our car. There were shrieks and groans, and, above all, the piercing cries of women. I found myself close against a car window, and drove my elbow through it. I was on the west side of the car, and looked out upon a stony and slippery embankment. Just then somebody shouted, 'This way' from the other side of the car. I started across the aisle, over broken seats and debris, to a window through which other passengers had escaped. The groans or the cries of a man entangled among the seats attracted my attention. I tugged at his coat tails and assisted him to his feet. He speedily scrambled out of the window to a place of safety, and I followed him. Mr. G. F. Spinney of the *New York Times* was, I believe, the last man out of the car.

"Within five minutes after the crash the two rear cars were in flames. The passengers stood in the snow and mud on the slippery embankment and saw the fire darting through the wreck of the two cars, powerless to assist those within, who were groaning and screaming for succor.

"The villagers quickly gathered at the scene of the disaster, and rendered such aid as they could; but it was several minutes before water, carried for some distance in pails, could be thrown upon the flames. Men and boys rolled huge balls of the damp snow and hurled it through the car windows, which other men had broken with fragments of the wreck. No faces appeared at the car windows, but cries in a dozen voices were heard from within. It was evident that they came from persons pinned fast beneath the débris and unable to escape.

"Before the police and firemen, with ladder and aparatus for extinguishing the flames, had arrived, a dozen persons had been suffocated. It is not probable that more than one or two were killed outright by the collision.

"About the middle of the rear car sat Park Valentine, 22 years of age, son of the gentleman who stood at the rear of the car and escaped. Young Valentine was on his wedding trip, having been married to Miss Louise Gaylord of North Adams, Mass., on Thursday night. Both bride and groom perished in the flames."

Lieut.-Gov. Barstow of Vermont, who was with the bridal party, had gone to a forward car, and he escaped uninjured. Near them in the car sat a large, handsomely dressed woman, apparently about 40 years of age. Her body was the first recovered from the wreck by the firemen. In her pocket was found a visiting card bearing the name "Mrs. Maude Brown, 455 West Forty-third street." A letter in her pocket was dated from the office of George M. Pinney, 58 Broadway, and was apparently written by her husband, Mr. Brown. A slip of paper on which was written "Dr. Watts, 49 West Thirty-sixth street," was in her pocketbook.

Miss Mary Daniels, who was on her way from Troy to visit friends in New York, was rescued alive. She suffered contusions and burns, but will recover.

Oliver Keely, a stove manufacturer of Spring City, Pa., was taken out through a window in a dying condition. His right arm was burned off nearly to the shoulder, and he was internally injured. The Doctor said he could not live until morning. He was 38 years old. His dying words were directions to send to his wife.

The body of a man of large stature, the face forever past recognition, was next taken from the wreck.

Then came a body, apparently that of a negro, supposed to be one of the palace car employees.

Then two more charred and blackened trunks of human forms were lifted out upon planks by the firemen. One of them was the body of a man. The other, it was conjectured, was that of a woman.

It was some time before more bodies were found. Fragments only remained of them. It was impossible to tell whether they were parts of one, two, or more human beings. Up to midnight the total number of dead was eight, and of the badly wounded, two. The wreck of only one car—the rear car—had then been searched. It was deemed probable that lives were also lost in the rear compartments of the car Empire, the second from the rear, with which the Idlewild had telescoped.

Nearly every seat in the Empire was occupied by Senators and Assemblymen, or with politicians on their way home from Albany. Among them were Police Commissioner Sidney P. Nichols, Edward Kearney, Senator Browning of New York, Morris F. Holohan, Assemblymen Van Allen, Robb Sheehy, McManus, J. J. Costello, and Charles Swan, Edward Cahill of Park row, Emigration Commissioner Ulrich, and Assemblymen Chapin and Monk of Brooklyn.

Nearly all of these escaped uninjured, or with slight cuts and bruises. Assemblyman Monk suffered the most serious injuries, and was nearly prostrated by the shock.

It is feared that Senator Webster Wagner is among the killed. Two or three minutes before the accident he passed through the train from a forward car, stopped to chat with Messrs. Nichols, Kearney, and Jacobs, and then proceeded to the rear of the train. A gentleman who was talking with Major Ulrich in the aisle a few feet from the rear of the car Empire, says that Mr. Wagner passed through, and, he thinks, went out of the door to the car Idlewild. At any rate, he did not return to the forward part of the train. It is probable that he was either in the extreme rear of the Empire car, in the platform, or in the forward part of the rear car. In either of those places he must almost certainly have been killed, as the cars telescoped, and their platforms were smashed or crushed together.

It is impossible to tell how many lives were lost. The passengers who escaped unhurt made their way to the city by various routes. Some went to King's Bridge. Others went on the uninjured section of the express train to the Grand Central Depot. News of the accident was late in reaching the city, and there were hardly any inquiries for the missing. The bodies of the dead were taken to neighboring houses, and thence to the Kingsbridge police station.

Medical aid was quickly summoned after the accident. Dr. Judson of Dobbs' Ferry was on the Tarrytown local train. None of the passengers on that train were hurt, and Dr. Judson quickly offered his services to the injured people on the Atlantic express. Dr. Parsons of Kingsbridge and Smith of Spuyten Duyvil were also prompt in attendance. There was but one passenger, Miss Daniels, for whom they could do anything. Mr. Keely was past all relief. They could only mitigate his sufferings until death.

The two cars continued to burn until little more than cinders and ashes remained behind, besides the running gear. The firemen worked assiduously in hope of preventing the destruction of bodies that might remain in the wreck, but those that still remain must be burned beyond all possibility of recognition. D. L. Ransom of the Hoffman House, in this city, is among the missing.

The railroad officials were very reticent as to the causes of the accident, and each, when asked referred the inquirer to some man further down the track, who in turn passed him along to somebody else.

The passengers on the express train and dwellers near the scene of the accident were outspoken in censure of the carelessness that had left the train standing on a track near a curve without proper danger signals far enough in the rear to prevent such a collision. Had a man been stationed on the other side of the curve, the Tarrytown train could easily have been stopped.

The general belief was that the loss of so many lives it will probably take an official inquiry to determine. But even the train men admitted that there was gross neglect of duty somewhere.

A wrecking train, with a large force of men, arrived after some delay, and ambulances from hospitals in the city arrived at a late hour, that were only used for the removal of dead bodies to the police station.

THE NEWS IN THE CITY.

In the first train which rolled into the Grand Central Depot after the accident Mr. John S. W. Jarvis of New Rochelle was the only passenger. He had stepped on the train at Yonkers, by the time the train had reached the scene of the wreck the upward bound track had been cleared, and the down train was switched off into the up track and rushed by the wreck, passed, whereupon it was switched back to its own track. Then the train stopped and everybody got out.

Mr. Jarvis said: "I had time to see nine persons taken out of the wreck. Some were dead, I'm sure. Three dead persons were taken to the Kingsbridge Hotel while I was there. I heard that there were eighteen either dead or wounded. For a little while I helped through water. Then my train started and I caught on. I was the only man on the train."

The news reached the Fifth Avenue and Windsor Hotels about 10 o'clock. To the former place it was brought by Senator George H. Fletcher of Long Island and another gentleman. Both were passengers on the train. There were but few people about the hotel at the time, but the news spread rapidly, and the gentlemen were the centres of attentive, inquiring groups. Mr. Charles H. Staats of Stantsburg, N. Y., who was on the train, came to the Windsor Hotel from the train, bringing the details of the disaster. It created the wildest excitement. A large number of personal friends of Senator Wagner were about the hotel. Mr. Chauncey M. Depew was dining at the hotel when he was called out by a messenger who informed him that in all probability Senator Wagner had been killed. He went at once to the Grand Central Depot, where he was subsequently joined by several friends of Senator Wagner. Among these were Henry Knickerbocker, T. C. Eastman, the cattle exporter; Major Soper, general manager of the Wagner Car Company; Edward T. Schenck, and a son-in-law of Senator Wagner's. At 10 o'clock a special engine left the depot for the scene of the accident, carrying General Superintendent John M. Toucey of the New York Central and Charles M. Bissell, Superintendent of the Harlem road. Several physicians accompanied them. The party from the Windsor Hotel and Mr. Depew awaited news from them at the telegraph desk in the train despatcher's office. No train arrived came to relieve their anxiety. The family of the Senator were brought together at his house, 14 East Forty-fourth street. The door was kept constantly ajar by those waiting for some messenger bringing tidings. Four were at the windows, watching each person who passed through the street. At 5 minutes to 12 a train which had been run up to the wreck reached the Grand Central Depot.

SENATOR WAGNER'S SON'S STORY.

Upon it was Senator Wagner's elder son. Mr. Depew and his family were awaiting him upon the platform. The moment he stepped from the train he was surrounded, and silently the little group listened to what he said. He had been unable to find any trace of his father, and believed he had perished in the burning car. From what he could learn from others, Mr. Wagner was of the opinion that his father must have been at the rear of the Idlewild or at the forend of the Empire when the collision occurred, and that he was instantly killed in the telescoping and his body burned. The friends who listened gave up hope as the story was told, and slowly straggled out of the depot. In the street they halted to debate upon the manner of announcing to the family that their worst fears were realized, and who should perform that sad office.

SCENES AT THE WINDSOR HOTEL.

The gathering at the Windsor remained until after midnight, eager for every bit of news that could be obtained. About 10 o'clock Mr. S. H. Knechaud and others, who were upon the ill-fated train arrived, and were overwhelmed with questions. But only the most meagre, unsatisfactory, and hearsay reports were obtainable, and these seemed simply to increase the anxiety. Prominent among the inquirers were D. O. Mills, Harvey Kennedy, and many well-known Wall street men.

SENATOR FLETCHER'S NARRATIVE.

Senator Fletcher, who was found at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, said that he was in the sixth car from the rear at the time of the accident. Every one was thrown from his seat, and the glass of every window was shattered. The train had been at a stand-still about fifteen minutes when the crash came. Upon going back he saw the rear car telescoped into the car ahead of it, which was already on fire. Every effort was made to get people out of the burning cars. After the cars had been burned a counting of the members of the Legislature was had, and Senator Wagner was the only one missing.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROBB'S ESCAPE.

Assemblyman Robb of this city was in the car next the rear, and escaped through a window. He landed just in front of the engine of the train which had caused the collision, and he was badly burned on the hands and wrists by the escaping steam.

E. H. STILWELL'S STORY.

E. H. Stilwell of Oswego, who was on the 6:25 P. M. train and was uninjured, said: "The first intimation I had that anything wrong was going on was when I felt the air brakes being put on. When the shock came the cars were tipped over, and passengers were thrown out of their seats. I was in the second car from the rear. Not ten minutes before the accident took place I had been in the rear car. After everything had settled down, I stepped, or rather jumped, from the car steps into snow and water and walked to the cars which were telescoped. They appeared to be broken up inside, and the passengers were making frantic efforts to get out, but the broken timbers barred their way. I saw at the end of the car nearest to me a woman held to the floor by a stove. One arm was free, and she waved it and screamed for help. Men tried to save her. She was wedged in so tightly that it was impossible to extricate her. Then the car caught fire. The conductor started the action of throwing snow on the fire, and parties of men climbed to the top of the hill above and rolled snowballs until they were large enough to be rolled down into the flames. Then buckets were got and water thrown on the fire; but the snow did the most good in extinguishing the flames."

Henry Lee, father of Deputy Coroner Lee, who was on the Tarrytown train which ran into the express train, said that he sat in the second car from the locomotive from Dobbs' Ferry. When the crash took place all the passengers in this car were thrown from their seats, and some were badly injured, but so far as he could learn no bones were broken. He sat in the second seat from the stove, and in front of him was a woman with an infant in her arms. When she was thrown forward the infant fell on top of the stove, and must have been frightfully burned. The woman was also thrown against the stove.

PASSENGERS AT THE COSMOPOLITAN HOTEL.

"It was about 11 o'clock," said Mr. Elmore, the night clerk at the Cosmopolitan Hotel last evening, "when the passengers on the Albany express came here. I was very busy at the time, but my attention was drawn to several who stood by the counter looking pale and excited. They were Mrs. and Mrs. Charles Allen of Oconaic, Mr. George Copeland, Westfield, Mr. James P. Moore of Columbus, Ohio, and Mr. James W. Moss of Columbus, Ohio.

Mr. Allen, who was the most nervous of the party, owing to his wife being very sick from fright, wanted the next train from the house. We showed them number 96. Mrs. Allen was so nervous that she wanted to see what precaution we had to prevent fires. Mr. Allen told us of the accident. He said that he occupied the fifth car in the train. This was the car next to the engine. The collision happened to come within thinking distance of all of a sudden all the passengers were thrown down. Some were dashed against the sides of the cars, others were thrown against the sides of the car, and others dashed to the floor. The excitement that then ensued was awful. As the lamps were thrown on the floor and the stove upset, Mr. Allen managed to hit his wife in his arms and both fell on the platform. Then Mr. Allen described to Mr. Elmore how the rear cars seemed to be all on fire, and how people screamed and shouted. It did not take a moment for volunteers to run into the burning cars and save those they could. Among those who were found killed Mr. Allen mentioned a newly married couple who were on their wedding tour. They were found locked in each other's arms, and seemed to be asleep.

SENATOR WAGNER.

Mr. Wagner, who was killed, was born in Palatine Bridge, this State, Oct. 2, 1817, and consequently was 64 years old. His parents were Germans, and gave him a common school education. He worked on his father's farm for a time and then learned the trade of wagon making. After this he became a station agent on what was then known as the Utica and Schenectady Railroad. He had considerable inventive faculty, and while he was station agent he made several improvements in railroading devices. He invented several systems for sleeping and drawing room cars, the result of which was the Wagner Sleeping Car Company, of which he was President. In this way he acquired a large fortune.

In 1870 he was elected Assemblyman by the Republicans of Montgomery County, and served on the Committee on Banks. In 1871 he was sent to the Senate from the Eighteenth Senatorial District, beating his opponent by over 3,000 majority. He was afterward reelected without opposition. In the Senate of 1872 and 1873 he was Chairman of the Committee on Public Expenditures and a member of the Committees on Railroads and on Grievances. The two years following he was Chairman of the Committee on Public Buildings, and was on the Committee on Railroads, Cities, and Agriculture. In 1876 and 1877 he was Chairman of the Committees on Printing and a member of the Committee on Railroads and on Villages. He was again elected by a large majority to the Senate, and was Chairman of the Committee on Railroads and a member of several important committees. He was elected to the present Senate without opposition.

Mr. Wagner resided on a fine farm just out of the village of Palatine Bridge, where he had a handsome country residence. He was a very popular man in the community, liberal and public spirited.

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CRIMINAL NEGLECT IN RAILWAY MANAGEMENT.

On the evening of January 13, an Albany express train on the Hudson River Railroad, drawn by two locomotives and bound for New York, was stopped by an accidental or unauthorized application of the air brakes just after the train had passed a sharp curve and a deep rock cut near Spuyten Duyvil Station, at the upper end of New York Island. The rear of the arrested train was shortly after run into by a regular train known as a Tarrytown special, also bound for New York. The rear car of the express train was wrecked by the collision and quickly fired by an overturned stove. Several passengers were instantly killed, and others, caught and held by wreckage, were suffocated or burned alive. In all eight lives were lost, including that of Senator Wagner, inventor of the drawing room cars which go by his name.

A very careful investigation of the conditions and causes of the disaster was made by a coroner's jury, largely composed of civil and mechanical engineers, resulting in a verdict which is quite exceptional in its sweeping condemnation of the conduct of the trainmen and the managers of the road, who were individually held responsible for the loss of life through their criminal neglect of duty.

Specially remarkable and encouraging are the findings of the jury relative to the culpability of the superintendent of the road and the officers of the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad Company: the former in neglecting to provide efficient safeguards against accident at a peculiarly dangerous part of the road; the latter in neglecting to provide suitable implements for the rescue of passengers in danger, and proper means for extinguishing fires on the trains, and in not establishing the competency of their employes by proper mental and physical examinations to test their qualifications for the responsible and critical duties imposed upon them.

"And, as a further expression of their opinion, the jury affirm that, with the experience of fifty years of railroad management, and with the appliances in general use for the prevention of like disasters, there appears to be no palliation whatever for the criminal carelessness and disregard for human life exhibited by the employes of the company. The conduct of these employes removed this calamity from the chapter of accidents, making the result of destructive agencies at work as much a certainty as the discharge of a piece of artillery. The only surprise is that the slaughter was not greater. It could not well have been less."

The evidence by which the justness of this verdict was supported and made imperative was not only overwhelming in its sufficiency, but it clearly indicated a general indifference to the safety of passengers on the part of the conductor and the rear brakeman of the express train, and the superintendent of the road, that is little less than appalling.

It remains to be seen whether the action of the grand jury and the courts in criminal proceedings against the guilty parties will be such as to discourage similar misconduct and neglect of duty by railway officials and servants in the future.

The safety of the arrested train in an unusually dangerous position devolved upon a train man who could not read, and who testified that, out of forty-five or fifty similar stoppages of the train while he had been rear man, he had gone back to flag following trains not more than four or five times, and then without instruction from the conductor of the train. This time he did not go back, and the disaster was an immediate result.

After the collision the loss of several lives might have been prevented had the train carried water buckets or other means of extinguishing fire, or axes to enable those unhurt to open the side of the burning car and release those who were wounded or caught in the wreckage. Or the fire itself might have been prevented had the heating apparatus of the car been of a safer sort. Still better, all liability to collision under such circumstances might have been prevented (at least not left to the hazard of an incompetent and negligent trainman) by the use of inventions well known to railway managers, or which would be well known were it not their deliberate policy to refuse to consider patented inventions (the use of which would involve payment of royalty to the patentees) unless personally interested in the patents.

It is too much to expect that the action of the courts in this case will be such as to convince railway managers and superintendents of the impolicy of the course they now pursue with respect to inventions designed solely to increase the safety of passengers. But one natural effect of easily avoidable slaughters like that at Spuyten Duyvil is to render the public impatient of delays in the adoption of safety appliances; and while it would not be wise to dictate what specific devices shall or shall not be used on the railways, laws may be passed, in consequence of such accidents, so increasing the penalties for killing or maiming passengers where well known precautions have not been taken to prevent such disaster, that railway managers will not dare to run the risk of not employing them.